

f.w.

# Soviet Reaction to Johnson

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN  
Star Staff Writer

U.S. officials are mildly encouraged by initial Soviet reaction to President Johnson's latest appeal for a slowdown in the arms race.

The encouragement is the result not so much of what the Russians said about Johnson's remarks, but of what they did not say.

In his State of the Union speech last Tuesday, Johnson noted that the Russians had begun deployment of a "limited" anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system around Moscow. This system could be the prototype of a nationwide ABM force.

Knowing of Pentagon and congressional sentiment for deployment of a similar U.S. system, Johnson repeated a plea he made three years ago for a freeze in new systems that "would impose on our peoples, and on all mankind, an additional waste of resources with no gain in security to either side." Officials believe that deployment of an ABM system would lead in turn to new offensive systems.

## Extreme Caution

The Soviet press has reacted with extreme caution to the whole discussion of ABM systems that has been taking place in the United States.

For instance, neither the Izvestia nor the Pravda accounts of the State of the Union address said a word about Johnson's flat statement that the Russians had begun deployment around Moscow of an ABM. The Soviet press likewise had ignored Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's earlier remarks on the subject three months ago.

The Pravda correspondent, however, did report that Johnson had called for a halt in the arms race, but this was written in the context of an article calling on the United States to prove by deeds its desire for peaceful relations. This means, in current Soviet jargon, stop bombing North Vietnam, and agree to Hanoi's four-point plan.

indicate to authorities here that Moscow is waiting for a formal U.S. proposal on the subject before making a concrete response.

The Russians probably are not completely adverse to the proposal—especially since many Soviet military men probably agree with McNamara that there is no such thing as an effective ABM system.

A formal U.S. proposal probably will await the reconvening of the Geneva disarmament conference next month. But private probings are expected to take place here and in Moscow.

Officials say Russia traditionally has shown little interest in controls on defensive systems.

But the costs of an ABM system—it might total as much

## Missile Plea Encourages U.S.

as \$70 billion before being finished—must weigh heavily on Moscow as well, officials believe.

The "wait and see" attitude on a weapons freeze also seems to have crept into Soviet discussions on a treaty banning the spread of nuclear weapons, officials report.

One indication of this attitude is a strong attack recently in the

Soviet press on the so-called McNamara committee within NATO that was set up in December to study various aspects of nuclear policy—but which has no say in the actual handling of nuclear weapons. The committee was set up partly to give the West Germans more involvement in nuclear matters, but also to ease Russian fears of German "fingers on a trigger."

But now the press is suggesting that the McNamara committee is opening doors to Bonn nuclear "ambitions," as well.

Officials here generally regard the latest Soviet comment on Germany as a negotiating position that the Russians can drop when they agree to sign a treaty—hoping thereby to gain some added prestige for being conciliatory.

The first authoritative commentary was written in Izvestia on Saturday by Nikolai Polyanov, one of that paper's top observers. He quoted Johnson's remarks on the need to "slow down the arms race between us, in both conventional and nuclear weapons and defenses."

But Polyanov added that "simpletons who still believe U.S. declarations on peaceful intentions will grow less and less in number if these declarations are not followed up by corresponding actions."

## Specialists' View

U.S. specialists say that if Moscow was not interested in Johnson's proposals, it could have rejected them out of hand while the Vietnam war is going on.

The first responses, however,